

Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Lake sturgeon

Acipenser fulvescens

Common name • Lake sturgeon

Scientific name • *Acipenser fulvescens*

State status • Endangered

Ecology

Lake sturgeon are widely distributed in North America. In Missouri, they are found in the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers but have also been known to occur in the larger tributaries of those two rivers. They prefer firm, silt-free bottoms of sand, gravel and rock. Reaching up to 8 feet in length and weighing as much as 310 pounds, lake sturgeon are one of the largest fish of Missouri. They are selective bottom feeders of snails, mussels, crawfish and aquatic insects. The life history of the lake sturgeon in Missouri is unknown. However, in other areas of its range, spawning occurs in late spring in water temperatures between 55-64 F. Eggs are deposited in riffles of small, rocky bottomed streams or along rocky shoals of lakes. Being long-lived, growth is slow and sexual maturity is not reached until 20 years of age. Males may live to be 55 years old and females may be 80-150 years old.

Reason for Decline

Before the 1900s, the lake sturgeon was a common and economically important fish in the Missouri River and elsewhere in its range. It is now listed as either threatened or endangered throughout most of its original range in the United States. Over-harvest appears to have been responsible for the greatest decline in abundance of the lake sturgeon. Pollution and restriction of migratory movements due to construction of dams have compounded the problems of over-exploitation.

Specific Recommendations

Although lake sturgeon populations have declined across much of their range, there is evidence that populations could become more abundant where there is adequate habitat. The lake sturgeon may serve as an indicator of ecosystem health because of its unique life history traits.

→ Alteration and removal of shallow rock and gravel areas should be avoided where this species occurs.

→ Practices that will increase siltation in preferred habitat should be avoided.

→ Dams and other impoundment structures should be prohibited in large rivers and their tributaries.

→ Channel alterations that will limit or eliminate shallow, sloping bank habitats should be avoided.

General Recommendations

Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in rivers and streams, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation
Policy Coordination Section
P.O. Box 180
2901 W. Truman Blvd
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division
901 North 5th Street
Kansas City, KS 66101
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Field Office
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573/876-1911

Disclaimer

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